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The Humble
P E T I T I O N
O F T H E
Protestants of France,

Lately presented to

His Most Christian Majesty,

By the Marechal Schomberg, and the Marquis of Ruigny.



A true Copy in English.

S I R,

WE your Subjects of that Religion (which we call the Reformed) do, with most profound Reverence, cast our selves at the feet of your Majesty, that so we may represent the many aggrievances which have been heaped upon us, one after another, and may most humbly beg some effectual resentments of the same, from your justice and goodness.

The Edicts of the Kings your Predecessors, and particularly those of Henry the Great, and Lewis the Just, which your Majesty most authentically confirmed at your happy inauguration, and since by divers and sundry Declarations have always had regard to those of the said Religion, which consists of a considerable part of those people which God hath committed to your charge: And as such, they have not only been permitted to exercise their Employments, and Arts, and Trades, whereby they gain their Livelihood, but also have been promoted to Places of Trust and Honour, as effects of their Merit and Vertue; They have also enjoyed a Liberty of Conscience, by a free exercise of their Religion and Discipline in all places privileged by the aforesaid Edicts, and Commissioners also have been appointed to take care, that there should be no infringements or violations thereof.

There have been also Courts of Justice consisting of men of both Religion, that at all times the Protestants might be assured of impartial justice both as to their Persons, and Estates. And the Gentlemen particularly had right, to place in their Fee-Farms those of one or the other Religion, without any difference: In short, your Petitioners enjoyed almost the same freedom and advantages, as the other Subjects of your Majesty.

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It is true, Sir, that these were the Concessions of the Kings your Predecessors, and of your present Majesty, and have been established with such circumstances, as the Edicts themselves call a perpetual and an irrevocable Law, designed purposely to keep your Subjects both of one and the other Religion in perfect amity. And your Petitioners can confidently averr, that they have so demeaned themselves under this Law, and Priviledges, as never to have rendred themselves unworthy thereof. But on the contrary have gained this advantage, that your Majesty hath made many solemn and gracious Declarations, testifying the entire satisfaction your Majesty hath conceived of the Zeal and Loyalty of your Petitioners, in times of most hazard and difficulty. And now, SIR, we need not search the Histories of many years, to demonstrate the difference of our present condition, from those times; for it is now but a few years since your Petitioners have not only been made incapable of being admitted into publick Offices, but discharged of those in which they were invested, and in which they had always served with honour and fidelity.

For contrary to the true intent and words of this Edict, they have taken from your Petitioners the priviledge of equally entring with others into the Commission of Consuls, and the Municipal Offices of Towns, even in those very Corporations, wherein your Petitioners are the greatest in the administration of the Civil Government, and management of that Money which is levied upon them.

They have not now in many places any admittance to the meanest Office in the Publick, nor are they licensed to exercise those Arts and Trades whereby they gain their sole livelihood and subsistence.

They can reckon up at least 300 Protestant Churches, which in the space of ten years have been demolished, notwithstanding that some of them have been expressly named in the Edict of *Nantes*, and others comprehended within the limites and sense thereof.

The Commissioners which are always ready to receive Process against your Petitioners, yet stop their ears to their complaints; and if they do take notice of them, it is with a corrupt and partial sentence, and often times the Catholick Commissioners pronounce Judgement against your Petitioners, without the intervention and assent of those of their Religion.

Those who have changed from the Protestant to the Catholick Religion, not finding that quietness of conscience which they expected therein, so that they have returned again to their first perswasion, have been exposed to most rigorous penances, under the term of Relapse, and the Ministers and Consistories have been liable to be suppressed.

If any of the Catholick Religion become Protestants, they presently persecute those to whom they applied themselves for clearing their doubts or declaring their belief, pretending that thereby they comie within the compass of that crime, which is called Subornation.

The Chambers of this Edict are not only incorporated with the Parliaments; against the expresse sense of the Edict, but are extinguished wholly, and suppressed.

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The Children of your Petitioners, though born in their Religion, are often taken from them, before they have attained to that age which the Edicts allow them, before they are obliged to declare the Religion which they resolve to profess: And if hereupon they address themselves to your Commissioners, advising them to put in execution the Edict, they either refuse to take cognizance thereof, or else elude it in that manner, that for several years together they take not the least notice of their complaints, nor have the ordinary Judges any regard thereunto.

They will not suffer the Protestants to entertain more then one School-master in the Town where they live; and though the Children amount to 2 or 3000 in number, yet they will not allow more then one Master for them all.

Your Petitioners have been much surprized by a Declaration issued out for changing the form and tenure of their Synods, by placing certain Catholick Commissioners for Assistants therein, which being entirely contrary to the meaning and substance of those Edicts, and Declaration of Lewis the 13th. set out in the year 1623. and to the custom always observed, hath no other foundation then those pretences which reflect on the honour of your Petitioners, and that fidelity which they have ever professed towards the service of your Majesty.

The Bishops under colour of their Visitations, and by vertue of an Order of Arrest from your Privy Council, have pretended to suspend the exercise of the Religion of your Petitioners for several weeks.

The Clergy which have entred the Protestant Churches, to hear the Sermons which are there preached, do object unto the Ministers matters which they never uttered, or take advantage of certain terms which cannot be avoided in Controversie, to form a criminal Process against them before a Judge, who is pre-possessed with a prejudice against them; and in the meantime the Clergy do not cease to justify themselves against the Petitioners, by such courses as are expressly forbidden by the aforesaid Edicts.

The Chief Justices of several places, to whom matters relating to the Edicts did never appertain, do now undertake by unknown methods of procedure, to interdict or suspend the Ministers of whole Provinces.

In fine, so far are they proceeded, as to make a Declaration, forbidding Protestant women to make use of other Chirurgions, or Midwives then those which are Catholicks, that so their Children may be dipped in water by them in case of necessity: which as it is directly opposite to the sense of the Edicts, so it is also to the Principles of that Religion which your Petitioners profess; for their consciences will never allow them to consent hereunto, because that as on one side, they cannot believe that Baptism is of an absolute and indispensable necessity, where death prevents the due care and cautions we use to obtain it; so on the other side, your Petitioners have that just reverence to so great a Sacrament, as not to commit the same to the administration of Lay-persons, nor believe that such dipping or sprinkling with water, can ever supply the place of Baptism.

These proceedings, SIR, and many more of them very considerable, are more easily mentioned in general, than to be troublesome to your Majesty in a recital of the particulars, which are either notoriously known to the World, or to be justified and made good by Attestations which your Petitioners have in their hands, together with Judgments, Arrests and Declarations. All the World, which observes the low condition unto which your Petitioners are reduced, begin to consider them, as persons exposed to the malice and persecution of those who desire their total destruction.

Nothing more can be added to the general consternation of those, who profess the Protestant Religion in all parts of your Kingdom; so that many for fear, or for necessity, have been forced to abandon their dwellings, and seek their repose in the Dominions of Strangers: such as remain here, are detained by the love they bear to their Native Country, or by some difficulty they find in the disposal of their Estates; though the greatest number are obliged with an affection to your Majesty and your Government. In all these aggrivances, SIR, your Petitioners have no other defence and protection, under God, then the justice and clemency of your Majesty, by which they have formerly had access to your Sacred person, which hath ever lent a gentle ear to the just complaints of your Petitioners, having nominated Commissioners of your Council particularly to examine their Cause, and make report thereof to your Majesty: but the great Wars which your Majesty hath lately maintained, have diverted this care to greater thoughts, whereby the evils and oppressions of your Petitioners have been multiplied and increased.

And now, SIR, since your Majesty enjoys the triumph of those glorious successes with which God hath favoured your designs, and that your People expect likewise to share some part of the fruit of their labours: your Petitioners hope, through the justice and gracious goodness of your Majesty, that no distinction shall be made between your Petitioners and your other Subjects, lest whilst some are in joy, and at rest, the others should mourn, and groan under oppressions.

For which Reasons, SIR, and because your Petitioners have ever entertained the same Zeal and Fidelity to your Service; may it please your Majesty to make known unto the Lords of your Council, Presidents, and Attorney-Generals of Parliaments, to Super-intendents, and Commissioners executing the Law, that your Royal Will and Pleasure is, that the Edicts be observed and executed; and particularly to encharge such Commissioners as are already named by your Majesty; or shall be hereafter named, that they examine the Memorials and Papers of Justification, which your Petitioners shall produce, and to inform your Majesty thereof; and especially to the Secretaries of State, that a due report may be made thereof, and of those aggrivances and burdens which are most oppressing, that so your Majesty being truly made sensible thereof, may act therein according to your gracious pleasure. And your Petitioners shall continue their vows, and prayers for the glory of your Majesty, and for the prosperity of your Sacred Person and Kingdom.

F I N I S.

